

THEIR HISTORY AND CULTURE

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BEGINNINGS OF MODIFICATIONS IN CHINESE CULTURE

In spite of the presence of the foreigner, until the late nineties the institutions and thought of China were almost entirely unaffected by contact with the Occident. When compared with the total of the domestic trade, foreign commerce was very small and of little importance. Economically, the Empire was still practically self-sufficing. Of the imports, only opium made a perceptible impression on any large proportion of the population. Most of the Westerners were concentrated in a few treaty ports and numbered merely a few thousands. Christians were too few and too scattered to alter the *mores* of their fellow-countrymen. With minor exceptions, the economic, social, intellectual, and political structure of the nation was as it had been a century before.

Some exceptions there were, however—foreshadowings of change. The Tai P'ing Rebellion had shaken orthodox scholarship by devastating its chief stronghold, the Yangtze Valley. Chinese organized (1873) the China Merchants Steam Navigation Company, which came to have a large share in coastal and river transportation. The first railway in China—running out of Shanghai—was built by foreigners, then bought by the Chinese, and its rails and rolling stock shipped to Formosa and allowed to rust. It is only fair to add that this apparently reactionary procedure seems to have been adopted chiefly because the Chinese objected to the extension of foreign-owned property outside the ports. By 1894 the beginnings of quite a system of railroads had been constructed by the Chinese in the North. In the early eighties a telegraph line was built, under contract

from the government, between Shanghai, Tientsin, and Peking. There was a slight development of coal mines by modern methods. Introduction of Western appliances might have proceeded more rapidly had the Chinese not been fearful, because of the probable international complications, of admitting foreign capital, either directly or by loans.

Some attempts were made to arm the country against the West with Occidental devices—arsenals, a few modern war craft, and troops drilled and equipped after the European fashion.

In Peking and Canton the government established schools for the training of men for the diplomatic service. Yung Wing, who had received his initial education in things Western in a school